

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ATHENS 13189

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TAGS: PINT GR
SUBJECT: UDC LEADER HITS OUT AT GOVERNMENT

1. SUMMARY: GEORGE MAVROS KICKOFF SPEECH FOR THE
DEC 12-14 CONVENTION OF UNION OF DEMOCRATIC CENTER
PARTY, BOTH IN TONE AND CONTENT, WAS ANOTHER
STEP IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF A POSITION OF FIRM
OPPOSITION TO THE POLICIES AND PERSON OF THE PRIME MINISTER.
IN THE PAST, MAVROS RESTRAINED OPPOSITION TO THE PRIME
MINISTER WAS ON OCCASION VERY HELPFUL TO CARAMANLIS, THOUGH
THIS TYPE OF QUASI-SUPPORT WILL BE MISSED, MAVROS NEW STAND IS
UNLIKELY TO CUT INTO THE PRIME MINISTERS OWN POLITICAL BASE.
END SUMMARY.

2. MAVROS ATTACKED THE PRIME MINISTER'S FOREIGN AND
DOMESTIC POLICY ARGUING THAT GREECE IS "IN DECLINE"
AND FACING A "NATIONAL CRISIS". FOR TWO YEARS
MAVROS HAS CHAFED AT CARAMANLIS OVERWHELMING MAJORITY
IN PARLIAMENT AND PERIODICALLY ACCUSED HIM -- NOT
INACCURATELY -- OF RUNNING A ONE-MAN SHOW. MAVROS
SPEECH ADDED PUNCH AND VENOM TO THIS CHARGE, STATING
THAT THE PRIME MINISTER DOES NOT BELIEVE IN PARLIAMENTARY
DEMOCRACY, THAT HE IN EFFECT "MURDERED" DEMOCRACY AT
"ITS BIRTH" BY IMPOSING AN ALLEGEDLY UNDEMOCRATIC
CONSTITUTION ON GREECE. HE SAID THAT THE GOVT
HAS NOT ONLY DONE NOTHING TM BUILD A HELLTHY DEMOCRACY
IN GREECE, IT HAS ACTUALLY OBSTRUCTED THE PROCESS SO
THAT GREECE TODAY IS A "DICTATORSYIP OF ONE MAN WHO
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EXERCISES AUTHORITY ON HIS OWN AS IF HE HAD A CARTE

BLANCHE MANDATE FROM THE PEOPLE".

3. MAVROS HIT OUT AT GOG FOREIGN POLICY FOR ALLEGEDLY LEAVING THE COUNTRY DIPLOMATICALLY ISOLATED, ALLOWING A SITUATION IN WHICH GREECE "IS BEING FORCED TO ACT AS OTHERS TELL US". HE STATED THAT "GREAT PRESSURES ARE BEING EXERTED AGAINST GREECE FOR A SOLUTION OF THE CYPRUS ISSUE OUTSIDE THE LIMITS SET BY UN RESOLUTIONS AND FOR A SETTLEMENT OF GREEK-TURKISH DIFFERENCES BEYOND THE RULES ESTABLISHED BY INTERNATIONAL LAW". THE UDC, HE SUGGESTED, WOULD FOLLOW A MORE NATIONALIST LINE. HE DECLARED THAT "WE ARE NOT A PROTECTORATE OF THE UNITED STATES WHICH ALLOWS THE US TO SOLVE ITS PROBLEMS". MAVROS OUTLINED THE UDC POSITION ON MAJOR FOREIGN POLICY QUESTIONS AS FOLLOWS:

-- US BASES IN GREECE SHOULD BE ALLOWED ONLY IF THEY ARE UNDER GREEK COMMAND AND ONLY IF THEY PROTECT GREECE "AGAINST THE DANGERS WHICH THREATENED IT." THAT IS, US MILITARY PRESENCE HERE MUST PROVIDE GREECE WITH SECURITY AGAINST THE TURKS.
-- IN CYPRUS AND IN THE AEGEAN GREECE SHOULD TAKE AN UNCOMPROMISING STAND AND ALL SHOULD KNOW THAT "GREECE WILL NOT CONCEDE ANY OF ITS SOVEREIGN RIGHTS TO SATISFY THE TURKS".
-- THE PARTY DOES NOT FAVOR APPROVAL OF THE DCA'S BETWEEN THE US AND GREECE AND TURKEY BECAUSE, IF BOTH ARE PASSED, THE BALANCE OF POWER IN THE AEGEAN WOULD BE TIPPED IN THE DIRECTION OF TURKEY.

4. IN ADDRESSING THE SUBJECT OF "OPPOSITION UNITY", MAVROS MADE IT CLEAR THAT THE UDC IS IN NO HURRY TO JOIN FORCES WITH ANDREAS PAPANDREOU'S PASOK AND OTHER FORCES ON THE LEFT. WHILE CALLING FOR THE REESTABLISHMENT OF THE BROAD CENTER UNION THAT WON THE 1963 AND 1964 ELECTIONS, HE SAID THAT EFFORTS TOWARD UNITY MUST BEGIN AT THE GRASS ROOTS OF THE PARTIES RATHER THAN AT THEIR TOP. SOMEWHAT IN CONTRAST TO THE REST OF THE SPEECH, MAVROS ALSO SAID THAT POLARIZATION IS A CONTINUING THREAT TO GREEK DEMOCRACY AND MUST BE AVOIDED.
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(THE LEFTIST EDA PARTY ON DEC 11 ANNOUNCED A MORE POSITIVE, IF STILL SOMEWHAT AMBIGUOUS ATTITUDE TOWARDS UNITY OF DEMOCRATIC SOCIALIST FORCES -- A GROUP WHICH EXCLUDES THE MOSCOW-ORIENTED EXTERIOR COMMUNIST PARTY. IN DOING SO, EDA CALLED FOR A ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION OF PARTIES SEEKING DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISM TO ACHIEVE GREATER COOPERATION AMONG THEM.)

5. COMMENT: THE MAVROS SPEECH APPEARS TO BE AN IMPORTANT STEP IN THE EROSION OF THE "ERA OF GOOD FEELING" WHICH DOMINATED CARAMANLIS FIRST TWO YEARS AS PRIME MINISTER. AS WE HAVE NOTED BEFORE MAVROS IS IN THE UNEVNABLE POSITION OF HAVING TO OPPOSE A GOVT WITH WHOSE POLICIES HE BASICALLY AGREES. ELEMENTS WITHIN HIS OWN PARTY HAVE LONG FELT THAT THE UDC WOULD GAIN GROUND IF IT TOOK A MORE CLEARLY DISCERNABLE POSITION OF OPPOSITION TO THE PRIME MINISTER. PASOK LEADER PAPANDREOU'S FLAMBOYANT OPPOSITION TO THE CARAMANLIS GOVT INCREASED THE PRESSURE ON MAVROS TO MOVE AWAY FROM THE PRIME MINISTER. THE GOVERNMENT'S REACTION TO ALL OF THIS HAS BEEN RELAXED, REFUSING TO GIVE MAVROS A SOUNDING BOX BY DIRECTLY ENGAGING HIM IN DEBATE. AFTER ALL, WHILE MAVROS MAY HAVE INCREASED HIS STATURE SOMEWHAT AS AN OPPOSITION LEADER, HIS STANCE IS MOST UNLIKELY TO CAUSE ANY DEFECTION IN THE WINNING COALITION OF MODERATES, RIGHTISTS AND OTHERS WHICH GIVES THE PRIME MINISTER HIS POLITICAL MUSCLE. KUBISCH

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